

A Final Salute

American military members are given a final salute with a beautiful flag ceremony during their funeral. A somber but meaningful tradition, it is our military's way of thanking its members for their dedicated service. Military honors are reserved for military members who died while on active duty or while in the Selected Reserve. Also, veterans who were honorably discharged who completed at least one term of their enlistment or term of obligated service in the Reserves are also eligible to receive these honors.

Learn the flag's role and other key components to a military funeral.

The Flag's Role

At the service, there will be an American flag draped over the coffin of the deceased serviceman or woman. With the family's approval, the flag may be pulled away to allow for an open-casket funeral. The flag should also be treated with utmost respect during this honorable funeral. This means flowers or pictures should never be placed on top of the flag. There are crescent-shaped arrangements available for resting on a coffin and avoiding contact with the flag.

Disposing of a Flag

When your American flag has served you well but is worn out and no longer a fitting emblem for display, the U.S. Flag code states that it should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning. Flags should never be repurposed for clothing or craft projects.

You might wish to burn your flag in a private ceremony so it is not misconstrued as a derogatory action toward America.

How to Know When it's Time

The U.S. Flag code says a flag should be destroyed when it is torn and tattered beyond repair. You also

The placement of the flag is also important. It should be placed so the blue field with stars is at the head and over the left shoulder of the deceased.

Flag-Folding Ceremony

Following the traditional 21-gun salute and the somber performance of Taps, the funeral concludes with a flag-folding ceremony.

Folding of the flag consists of 12 folds, each one represents a different aspect of America, God and other factors that our country depends on. Here are the steps to properly fold a flag as reported by The American Legion:

Step 1: Straighten out the flag to full length and fold lengthwise once.

Step 2: Fold it lengthwise a second time to meet the open edge.

Step 3: A triangular fold is then started by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to the open edge.

Step 4: The outer point is then turned inward, to form a second triangle.

Step 5: The diagonal or triangular folding is continued toward the blue union until the end is reached, with only the blue showing and the form being that of a three-corner hat.

Once the flag has been folded, it is then given to a member of the deceased's family. It is used to represent an expression of gratitude for the sacrifice they have made.

should look for other signs of wear, such as fading or soiled spots.

Once you have determined your flag is due to be respectfully burned, be sure you have a new one available as a replacement.

How to Dispose of a Flag

There is a specific process you must follow to properly retire a flag. Depending on whether you are performing the ceremony in your backyard or an event in your community, here are the minimum steps that should be included, as stated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

- The first step of respectful flag

burning is to fold the flag in the customary manner. This involves the traditional 12 folds that represent different American customs and values.

- You should then build a large fire that is of proper intensity to ensure complete burning of the flag.
- Once the fire is sufficient, safely place your flag in the flames.
- Now, the attendees of the ceremony should come to attention, salute the flag and say the Pledge of Allegiance. Have a brief period of silent reflection.
- Once the flag is entirely consumed, the fire should then be safely extinguished and the ashes buried.

Some organizations who perform flag-burning ceremonies may have additional traditions they prefer to follow. Out of respect and to learn something new, follow along with the unique steps provided by these groups.



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